

Art and Obscenity

By

ALBERT ARTHUR ALLEN

I HAVE held my art as sacred as the building of a temple; year by year it has grown; I have struggled and worked and built for sixteen years, and then, like a thunder-bolt from a clear sky, comes destruction! ~~The whole~~ huge pyramid sways and totters, only the deeply laid foundation of training and labor has saved the pinnacles of achievements. Life is given to us; we are taught the laying of the foundation, and then it is our duty to build. Some build methodically, and some, recklessly. The artist builds like the dreamer, a castle, he attains height by hazardous endeavors, and it is all worth the risk if there are followers who profit by the gain.

This is symbolical of my life's study and my recent persecution; I am still in pursuit of my ambitions and hope to glory, in triumph, for those who follow; my cry is Freedom in Art! I have suffered the assaults of envy, and the ridicule of mediocrity—it is ignorance and cowardice that extinguish the light of genius and dig the grave of art, as of nations. In memorial of the old masters, and in sympathy with the young artists of today, I am editing a monthly publication, "FREEDOM in ART," also a de luxe photographic series, "THE BOUDOIR."

I have selected the boudoir as a strong note in modernism and realism, it is woman's domain, it is forbidden; it is intimate; and thus, it bespeaks a chaste beauty.

Beautiful women, in themselves, are only a glorious achievement, while in the girl of simplicity there is a true echo of art. Posing and beauty in themselves are not necessarily art. It is the instinctive emotions of girlhood unhampered, that give us the true feminine temperament and charm alike. We love the truth, as we know it; the joys and the sorrows. These emotions must be vested in the beauty that lend to art. This applies to figure work. The nude figure is always an achievement to the photographer, as well as to the painter. In painting, the nude is either a technical study, and not a picture at all, or it is an allegory, or an illustration of some legend. The painter or photographer,

always goes back in history for his theme, in a nude composition. A fact of solemnity that characterizes the picture as classic.

There are but a few modern painters that dare to push aside this old tradition and draw their theme from the modern world, of which, we know and understand. I might mention two American painters who have modernized their nudes in typical settings of today. In 1921, William McGregor Paxton, carried the highest honors, by popular vote at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. A beautiful painting of a nude seated at her boudoir table. Last year the Philadelphia prize was awarded Sidney E. Dickinson for his portrait of a nude woman standing in a library. There are other national and international painters who have dared to handle the subject of the nude in intimate settings of modern architecture and finery that we know. The justice in this may be strengthened by a quotation from a great European art critic, "We love what we know, and that only."

This may be why the layman passes by the work of the old masters, as the models or types, they do not know, also the settings are in a period they do not know. It seems that art is one of the few things in which the world has not progressed. The Greeks first brought art to a high degree of excellence, and when Greece declined, we seem to have been traveling in circles. It is a case of re-appreciation and review. The noble Greek and Roman creations were commonplace to the genius of those days, there was a profound understanding of their human anatomy, as it was seen and known to them. To the layman of today it is but history, it lacks human interest.


If we are to have a great art of tomorrow, it must be as grand and noble as the creations of the Greek and Roman, and its theme must be of the day in which we live, of the things we know and love. This is the source of my inspiration; I have chosen "The Boudoir" as my theme and title. The lady's Boudoir and Bath of today is as inherent in its beauty as the ancient Roman Garden or Grecian Bath.

For this series, I am selecting models of the most charming and voluptuous types, which will rival the classics of Venus and Psyche. My settings will be typically modern in every detail, from the cedar hope chest, the walnut bed, and the sunken tile bath. I am throwing myself heart and soul into this new work, with a hope of a powerful stimulus to modern art. This photographic series, "The Boudoir," is dedicated to my serious followers, and stands as a challenge to censorship. Perhaps it is the persecution, perhaps it may be the primitive tendencies that reflect a peculiarity of the individual; or the individual may feel in his bosom a spark of the spirit which led Homer, Dante

and Michael Angelo to immortality. We have always been told that most great artists do their work when in association with adversities. And it is my present adversities that have inspired me to further my creations in the face of what might have been my destruction. I am a sincere believer of the nude and feel that I am predestined to teach the truth. I have fifty thousand followers, who are, to my belief, sincere devotees of the nude. And it is with this confidence in my followers that I am willing to bare my most vital plans for my new Pictorial Series, "The Boudoir." This will be the acid test for ART and "OBSCENITY." If they have tried to stamp my past work—"OBSCENE; LEWD; LASCIVIOUS; INDECENT; FILTHY"—I await the eruption, upheaval and condemnation of the so-called purity leagues and societies for the suppression of vice—on the release of my new Pictorial Series, "The Boudoir." And all that I ask in return is that my loyal followers will express their frank and candid opinion, or criticism, in regard to this new series, as well as my past work relative to ART and OBSCENITY.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Albert Arthur Allen". The signature is fluid and elegant, with a large initial 'A' and a long, sweeping underline.

"The Boudoir"

HE appellation, "MASTER of the NUDE," has been SEVENTY MILLION times associated with the name Albert Arthur Allen, since the beginning of his career. Doubtless this association will continue in art through the years to come.

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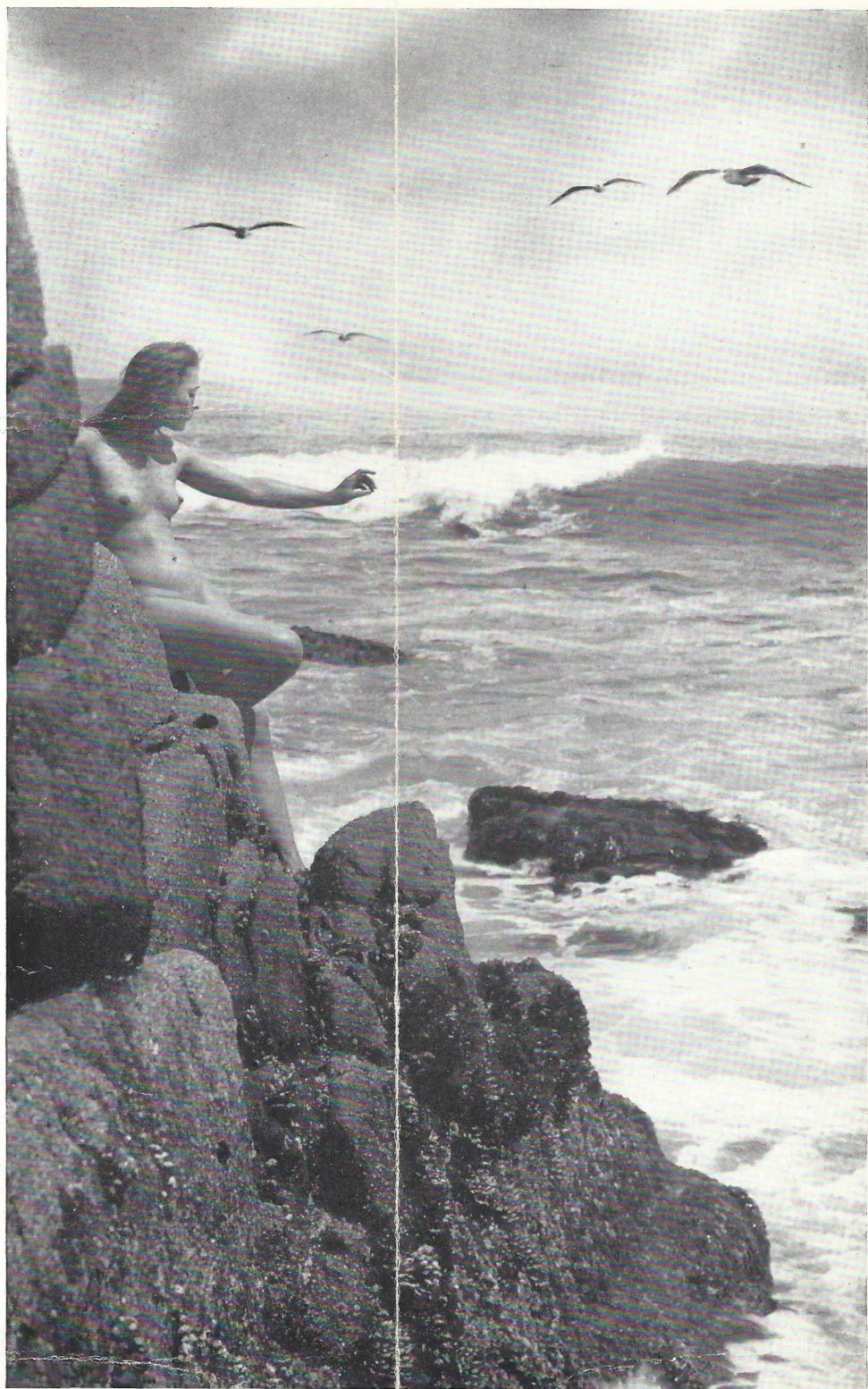
Persecution

I, ALBERT ARTHUR ALLEN, have devoted my life to the study of fine arts. I have exhibited in many galleries in the United States. I have conducted classes in drawing, painting and anatomy. Through my devoted study of the human figure, I have become nationally and internationally known. My creations have had a strong influence in promoting the nude in modern art. I have experienced success and persecution alike—it has been a single-handed fight against prudery, and for the freedom in art. I have just defeated the Government in two bitter trials. They have tried to stamp my work of the nude—"OBSCENE; LEWD; LASCIVIOUS; INDECENT; FILTHY." This charge is preposterous and outrageous; a ridicule in itself to our great national art.

It is believed that this charge was formulated through so-called purity leagues and societies for the suppression of vice. "Suppressions" always call for prosecutions, which have pursued many estimable and even noble works of literature, science, and art, based on the theory that "obscenity" resides in the OBJECT and not in the PERSON who experiences the licentious feeling. Therefore, the person should be suppressed, if suppression is called for.

The question of "obscenity" and censorship has been a national problem for the past twenty-five years. Through the earnest work of certain publishers, authors and artists a greater freedom has been realized. I feel that at this present day there is a great need for an exclusive monthly publication devoted to a national freedom in art. With my own persecution still burning in my soul, I have determined to edit such a publication. It will be an original and powerful medium backed by the most courageous artists and authors of today.





In Picture Form

Alo Studies

From the Original Negatives

By ALBERT ARTHUR ALLEN

Photographic Department Reorganized

WE take pleasure in announcing the reopening of our new photographic section which has been closed for business for the past several months for the purpose of experimental and scientific work, under the personal direction of Albert Arthur Allen, with the assistance of one of the foremost photographic experts.

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